

Recognizing the Community of Barnes, Kansas

July 14, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the citizens of Barnes, Kansas for continuing efforts to sustain and revitalize their community.

Deb Kruse, local bank manager and active civic volunteer, wants to see her hometown raise another generation of Kansans. "We are very fortunate and blessed to have a community that pulls together to support our businesses and projects that need volunteer or financial assistance, Kruse said. "We have a lot to offer--not always a large salary--but caring friends and neighbors."

Despite its small size--144 people--Barnes is bustling with activity.

More than a year ago, the city council started a successful initiative to rehabilitate and demolish old houses. To date, eight homes have been rehabilitated and five old structures have been demolished.

The volunteer fire department is made up of 20 dedicated members. With the assistance of local and federal funding, the department has successfully upgraded its pumper truck, safety equipment, information system and continuing education requirements.

More than 20 years ago, the Barnes Community Development Corporation was formed to help sponsor important community services and events. In 1995, the corporation purchased and still operates the Hometown Cafe. The corporation is also working to preserve the Barnes Gym which hosts Bingo every Thursday night and is utilized for wedding receptions, programs, plays and other community events. Through the years, the corporation has organized many community activities and celebrations: Barnes Old Home Days, Water Garden Tours, Washington County Junior Miss Scholarship Program and the Annual Barnes Lighted Horse Parade.

Close to four years ago, residents came together to open a faith based youth center called The Refuge. Thanks to generous personal donations of time and money, The Refuge is currently located in a renovated one room school house. Adult mentors, otherwise known as "Servants of the Refuge," provide area youth opportunities to gather and grow through meaningful community service projects.

Rehabilitation of the Barnes I.O.O.F. Park was initiated by Ms. Marilyn Laflin, a Master Gardener, who donated her time and expertise to the project. Community members have donated lamps, benches and various other items to the park in memory of loved ones. The

local Lion's Club has been instrumental in maintaining the beauty of all community parks. In addition, the club provides assistance to the Hometown Café, makes improvements to the local ball field and band shell, and erected the town's welcome signs.

Our Daily Bread Family Bake Shoppe and Bistro is a family owned business that started out of a two car garage in December of 2002. Since October of 2003, people have come from all over to dine on delicious homemade meals in a beautiful, historic 100 year old downtown building. The success of Our Daily Bread is testament to what is possible, with creativity and hard work, in rural America.

The newest community entity is the Barnes Trust for Historic Preservation. The trust is in the formation stage and is charged with preserving and restoring the historical identity of the community. The trust's first priority will be to help restore the Barnes State Bank.

The city maintains an extensive website that includes a list of 26 entities on its business and organization directory. That list includes three antique shops, three churches, two bed and breakfasts, two automobile repair shops, two building contractors and a plumber.

Gloria Moore, city treasurer, knows it is no accident that so much is taking place in such a small town. "The individuals that have started businesses in Barnes have invested their money and talents to keep our community alive," Moore said. "We could live anywhere in the world but choose to live in a small community, because we're sold on rural

Kansas."

For rural communities to survive and prosper into the future, citizens must be willing to create their own opportunities for success. Ongoing efforts to revitalize Barnes are an example of how hard work, vision and community support can create just such an opportunity.

Citizens throughout Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Barnes is a success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.